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THE
IRIT-MOTHER
AND OTHER POEMS



MIRIAM SHEFFEY



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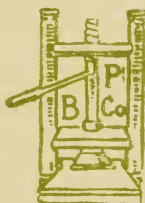
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The Spirit-Mother

AND OTHER POEMS

By

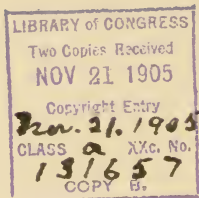
MIRIAM SHEFFEY



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The Spirit-Mother.

The Spirit-Mother.

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Company, Nashville.

I HEAR the sound of her soft old shoes
As she toils up the shadowy stair.
I hear her open my chamber door,—
Yet I know she is not there.

I see the tears in her gentle eyes,
The shine of her beautiful hair,
The pitying love in her sweet old face,—
Yet I know she is not there.

I see the folds of her worn black gown
As she sits in the rocking-chair,
And lovingly, tenderly bends o'er my bed,—
Yet I know she is not there.

Oh, the cadences sweet of her soft old voice!
Naught have I now to fear,
For I feel the touch of her hand of love!—
Yet I know she is not here.



“My dear little, poor little suffering one!

My precious! My baby! My own!”

She is saying,—I hear them, those old, old
words!

Yet I know I am all alone.

Sleeping.

Sleeping.

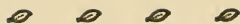
By permission of the *New York Observer*,
New York.

INTO the dim old parlor
With bated breath I go,—
The quaint old room whose curtained gloom
She once did know.

'Tis here that she was christened,
Was loved and wooed and wed,
And here to-night in robes of white
She lieth dead.

About her snowy draperies
The pallid moon-flowers twine.
Her little head is garlanded
With jessamine.

A rose sleeps in her fingers
And lilies kiss her brow.
Her weary life of grief and strife
Is over now.



The waxen candles' radiance
Upon her bosom lies,
Her shining hair, her face so fair,
Her veiled eyes.

Into the solemn silence
With bleeding heart I go.
Would I could die! Bereft am I
Who loved her so!

Yet why should there be mourning?
Why bitter words be said
When after years of toil and tears
She lieth dead?

Not dead, but only sleeping.
A sweet and blest surprise
For her awaits where ope the gates
Of Paradise.

For her, no more of weeping,
No more of burning pain,
No ill, no sorrow, no sad to-morrow,
No sin or stain.

The rough and thorny pathway
Her patient feet have trod
With blood is red, but it hath led
Her up to God.

Out from the dim old parlor
With faltering steps I go,—
The quaint old room whose curtained gloom
She never more will know.

The Triumph.

The Triumph.

By permission of the *Christian Observer*,
Louisville.

I AM so glad to die! Didst thou in
truth believe

That I should look with dread upon
Death's coming?

Ah, no! With joy, not fear, I do receive

This Messenger, and like a homing

Dove, I feel within my breast

A hope of peace, of never-ending rest.

I am so glad to die! My days have been re-
plete

With toil and pain, regret and bitter
weeping.

But all will soon be past. My wearied feet

And aching heart will find in sleeping

Surcease from sorrow. Blessed thought!

It is for this that I so long have fought.

I am so glad to die! Then wherefore
should'st thou mourn?

This is no time for tears, so hush thy
crying.

Remember all the burdens I have borne!

Thou shouldst rejoice that I am dying.
My little one, why be dismayed?
It is for this that I so long have prayed.

I am so glad to die! No more can I endure.
In throes of struggling agony I languish.
God knows my pain,—I trust His promise
sure.

No matter what may be my anguish,
Yet still within my mind I keep
This thought, "He giveth His beloved
sleep."

I am so glad to die! High up in air I hear
An angel host in chorus sweetly singing,
And mingling with the seraph song the
clear,

Pure notes of heavenly harps are ringing.
How good, how sweet it is to die!
Thank God for peace! My little one, good-
bye!

Yesterday.

Yesterday.

THEY said that I must go away, beloved,
when you died,
Away from the old home your life and love
had glorified.
They said I must not live alone in this
house so great and grim,
With haunted rooms and corridors all si-
lent, sad and dim.
They said that I must not be left to tread
these ghostly ways,
To mourn through desolated nights and
desolated days.

But only in this hallowed home can I con-
tented be,
This home made dear and beautiful by your
white memory.
These ancient rooms and passages, to others
grim and gray,
For me are radiant with the light and love
of yesterday.

Across the gloom the shining of an angel
face I see,
And hear, through sombre silences, a soft
voice calling me.

O who can know, my dearest one? O who
can understand
How, through the fragrant summer dusk,
together, hand-in-hand,
Along these sacred garden-ways we wander,
you and I,
While dew-wet blossoms gently dream and
winds go whispering by?

One spot is holier to my heart than all the
rest beside,—
The bright old room, the white old room,
the room in which you died.
And only I can enter there! No other
understands
The sound of spirit-footsteps or the touch of
spirit-hands.

O who can understand, dear love? O how
can others know
That all my joy is dreaming of the joy of
long ago?

The Old Church Organ.

The Old Church Organ.

By permission of the *Christian Observer*,
Louisville.

FAR back in the desolate basement,
Where darkling shadows lie,
Where cobwebs white festoon the walls,
Where human footstep seldom falls,
Where turbulent rats hold constant sway,
Where night is ever the same as day,
They have left me alone to die.

Was it yesterday that they bore me
Down the narrow winding stair,
Away from the joy, the song, the light,
Into the misery, terror and night?
Away from the music's melodious strain,
Into the loneliness, yearning and pain?
Was it then they brought me here?



The hours are slow in passing!

I lose all count of time.

It seems like long, long weary years

Since they hid me away in this place of
fears.

O why was I taken from joys untold?

O why was I brought to this prison cold,

I, who have done no crime?

They say I have grown old-fashioned.

I am shabby and out of date.

My voice is cracked and my notes *will* stick.

I am wornout and wheezy and stiff and sick.

I have been fine enough in my day, so 'tis
said,

But in *this* church I never again shall be
played!

O pitiless, pitiless fate!

“Yes, old, very old,” they are saying,

And yet I feel as young,

As ready for chant and psalm and hymn,

For wedding gay or funeral grim,—

As eager to lift my voice on high

As I did on that Sabbath morn when my

Inaugural song was sung.

I have been so true and faithful!

In patience, in love I have worked.

I have whispered of mercy to those who
were sad.

I have shouted for joy with those who were
glad.

At Christmas and Easter and Thanksgiv-
ing time

I have mingled my voice with the mellow
chime.

No service have I shirked.

Yet yesterday I was forsaken!

And never a tear was shed!

Never a soothing word they spoke

To comfort the poor old heart they broke!

I heard no sympathetic sigh,

No whispered grief, no soft goodbye!

Never a word they said!

I am out of all sight and all hearing.

Another has taken my place.

Another will join with the worshipping
throng

In jubilant chorus, in sweet solemn song.

Another of workmanship noble and fine
With voice far more mighty and mellow
than mine

Will tell of God's wonderful grace.

I know there is one who remembers

My blessed, my triumphant days.

'Tis she 'neath whose fingers so slender, so
skilled,

My soul was awakened, my spirit was
thrilled.

Together we've worked through the golden
years.

Together we've laughed, together shed tears.

Together we've told His praise.

In silence I'm waiting and longing

For the touch of her magical hand.

She will kiss with her fingers my yellowed
old keys,

And no matter how much I tremble and
wheeze,

By the force and the power of her glorious
art,

She will bring from the depths of my pul-
sating heart

A symphony rich and grand.

Perhaps she will come to-morrow,
My lady sweet and fair.
Perhaps in a passion of yearning love
She will steal away from the light above,—
Perhaps when the service is o'er she will
slip
Apart from the shining crowd, and trip
Down the narrow winding stair.

O hasten thy coming, my lady!
For Death is very nigh!
O hasten, and bring to this piteous place
The shine of thy presence, the light of thy
face!
O hasten, my lady, and make me rejoice
With the touch of thy fingers, the sound of
thy voice,
Just once, only once ere I die!

The Message.

The Massage.

(To a Sprained Ankle.)

By permission of the *Christian Observer*,
Louisville.

THEY give you a tug and a twist, little
foot,

A pinch, a jerk, and a pull.

They give you a wrench and a thrust till
your cup

Of tragical sorrow is full.

You think they are needlessly harsh, little
foot.

You think they are cruel and mean.

You cannot see why you should have to en-
dure

This pain so unbearably keen.

Many times you have wished you were dead,
little foot,

In a daisy-starred grave cool and deep,

Where your agony over forever and aye,

You would sweetly, deliciously sleep.

Had you lungs, you would loudly protest,
little foot,

Had you eyes you would piteously weep,
But, alas! there is no way for you to make
known

This anguish so bitter, so deep.

O tired little foot! Be patient and brave.

There is always a purpose in pain.

This fiery trial will soon end in joy,—

Peace and comfort you surely will gain.

For out of the shadow comes shine, little
foot,

And after the pain comes relief.

Out of the evil come goodness and love,

And gladness swift follows the grief.

It is ever this way in all life, little foot.

God chasteneth whom He doth love

To make them more fit for the Kingdom of
Heaven,

More eager for mansions above.

This torture to you is mysterious, strange.

So it is with each one of God's ways.

As through a glass darkly at present we see,

But we shall know one of these days.

O think then how sweet it will be, little
foot,

When on errands of love you can go,

And carry glad tidings of comfort and joy

To others in bondage and woe!

Partridges in November.

Partridges in November.

By permission of the *National Magazine*,
Boston.

I.

SILENTLY through the waving grass
The little brown creatures, trembling,
pass.

Under the willows by the brooklet's side

The little brown creatures, panting, hide.

Over the fields in the dawning gray

The little brown creatures speed away.

Where sunbeams dance and dewdrops glis-
ten

The little brown creatures listen, listen!

Where the dying goldenrod's feathers
quiver

The little brown creatures shake and shiver.

Low on the grass where the leaves lie dead

The little brown creatures go to bed.



Weary and worn they slumber, but—
With only *one* of their optics shut.

The little brown creatures are hushed with
fear,

For they know that danger and death are
near.

Death in the sunshine, death in the shadow,
Death in the forest, death in the meadow.

Death in the boulders, death in the bushes,
Death in the grasses, death in the rushes,

Death in the valley, death on the hill,

Death in the river, death in the rill,

Death in the rain, death in the breeze,

Death in the flaming forest trees.

Just how they can know is hard to tell,

But the little brown creatures know full
well,

(Though they never pause to wonder why,)
That the hour of their doom is drawing
nigh.

And the little brown creatures sigh and
grieve,

For the world is too fair, too sweet to
leave!

II.

Stealthily over field and bog
The Enemy comes with gun and dog!
And O, such a roar, such a tumult is heard
That even the grand old trees are stirred!
And the little brown creatures so timid, so
 shy,
They tremble and scream, they flutter and
 fly.
In the forest confusion and panic reign.
Where was peace now is war with its hor-
 ror and pain.
Let pitying tears be solemnly shed!
Let a dirge be sung and a prayer be said!
The little brown creatures are dead, dead,
 dead!

The Deserter.

The Deserter.

By permission of the *Christian Observer*.

THE sun set in the gorgeous west,
The day, reluctant, died.
Out in the crimson evening light,
Across the lawn so wide,
An old man and a little maid
Walked slowly side by side.

High above in the summer sky
The stars came one by one,
And shed their light on the darkened earth
Which mourned the absent sun.

Sudden across the glistening dome,
With one swift glowing ray,
A meteor flashed. It hastened on
To join the lifeless day.
"O, dran'pa, see!" the child exclaimed
"One 'tar has runned away!"

My Lady.

My Lady.

AMONG the blossoms that she loved my
lady lies.

There are no marks of tears about her shadowed eyes,

No signs of toil upon the little hands that rest

Like snow-white lily-blooms across her peaceful breast.

Her brow gleams softly underneath her glistening hair.

No lines of woe and agony are written there.

Upon her lips so sweet, so smiling, so serene,

No touch of sadness or of suffering is seen.

Awed by the angel-beauty of her perfect face

Which bears of grief and bitterness no faintest trace,

Those who so deeply loved her linger at her
side,
And wonder, sobbing, why it was my lady
died.
For only Christ, the Christ of Pity, under-
stands
That hidden there beneath those little
folded hands
A pulseless heart all broken, bleeding,
bruised and torn,
Bears witness to the many sorrows she has
borne.
None but the Christ, the Christ of Tender
Love, can feel
The anguish she has felt, and none but
Christ can heal.

“Of Such is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

“Of Such is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

By permission of the *Christian Observer*,
Louisville.

WHERE lilies nod their stately heads
And maples cast their shade,
And where the rose its fragrance sheds,
The little boy was laid.

Around the cross which marks the place
The honeysuckle vine,
The myrtle and the clematis
Their clinging tendrils twine.

Beside him as he lies asleep
The soft-eyed daisies wave.
By night, by day, a watch they keep
About his lonely grave.

The joyous butterflies flit past
On trembling gauzy wings,
And in a bride's wreath bush nearby
The robin sways and sings.

The crystal dewdrops sparkle there
When comes the break of day.
Among the myrtle leaves at noon
The laughing sunbeams play.

At eventide, when sets the sun,
The tender breezes sigh,
And o'er the hallowed spot at night
The golden moonrays lie.

Sometimes when I am sorrowful
And teardrops dim my vision,
Into my lonely yearning heart
God sends a dream Elysian.

And in this Heaven-sent dream I see
A broad and shimmering river
Whose healing waters gently flow
Forever and forever.

Along the sloping river-banks
Grow God's unchanging trees.
Celestial flowers of matchless hues
Bend in the perfumed breeze.

Upon the further shore I see
A shining white-winged band,
And One, most glorious of all,
Holds in His Own thy hand.

I see him lift thee in His arms,
And on his sacred breast
In faith, in joy, in peace, in love
Thy little head doth rest.

O angel-child! On earth we faint
In sin and darkness, while
It is thy privilege to live
In the sunshine of His smile!

So sad are we! Yet we would not
Call thee to earth again.
We would not have thee know the world,—
Its sin, its grief, its pain.

So while triumphant hosts rejoice
And spirit-anthems ring,
Sing on, O little angel voice,
Thy praises to the King!

The Garden of the Sky.

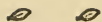
The Garden of the Sky.

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Boston.

THEY say I shall not live to see the
spring;
That I shall never more behold
The beauty of my garden as bud and leaf
unfold
In token of a glorious blossoming.

They say that I shall never live to see
The radiant morns, the azure noons,
The tender springtime twilights, the golden
springtime moons,
Nor hear the flashing bluebird's melody.

No more will hyacinths their perfume
spread,
Or lilies of the valley wake.
The violets and windflowers, that blossomed for my sake,
Will lift their heads in vain when I am
dead.



No more will peachblows blush or lilacs
wave.

The music of the wind and rain,
The laughter of the sunshine I shall not
know again
When hidden in the darkness of my grave.

I shall not miss this gladness when I die,
For blossoms fine and blossoms fair,
Of rich and fadeless splendor await my
coming there
Within the wondrous Garden of the Sky.

I shall forget the bluebird's little song.
Through heavenly spaces I shall hear
The holy angel-anthems, too vast for mortal
ear,
Majestic, grand, divinely sweet and strong.

I shall forget the sunshine laughter soon,
The joyous beauty of the earth,
The wind and rain of April, the Maytime
moon and mirth,
In that Fair Land which needs not sun and
moon.

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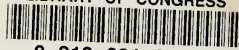
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